

# NEWS FROM



# THE LIBERTARIAN PARTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 27, 1995

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## **Don't use the Oklahoma City tragedy as an excuse to restrict civil liberty, says Libertarian Party**

WASHINGTON, DC -- The tragic bombing in Oklahoma City should not be used as an excuse by the government to restrict civil liberties, the Libertarian Party warned today.

"Law-enforcement agencies should act swiftly to bring the criminals who committed this heinous act to justice," said Steve Dasbach, Chair of America's third largest political party. "However, we must not dishonor the men, women, and children who died in that brutal and senseless act by linking their tragedy to any effort to undermine fundamental American liberties.

"The freedoms recognized under the Bill of Rights are our strongest bulwark against terrorism," asserted Dasbach. "Security measures that infringe on those freedoms will inevitably lead to abuse, ultimately making us less secure in our lives and property."

Dasbach said he was specifically concerned by President Bill Clinton's demand for increased police powers to spy on "right wing" groups, even when there was no evidence of criminal activity. Clinton said such powers were needed to protect "our way of life."

"An abiding respect for liberty is our way of life," countered Dasbach. "Law-enforcement agencies already have wide-ranging powers to engage monitor criminals -- after they demonstrate the probable cause required by the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution."

Dasbach said he had vivid memories of past FBI abuse, such as the harassment of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King. "It's ironic," said Dasbach. "Then, we had a conservative president using the power of

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government to persecute liberal causes. Now, we have a liberal president demanding the power to bully conservative causes. It was wrong back then -- it's still wrong today."

Dasbach also said he hoped the Oklahoma City bombing would not be used to discredit legitimate, peaceful efforts to discuss abuses of government power, and said Clinton's demand for "some discipline" in freedom of speech and association was "chilling."

"Clinton's attack on talk-radio is really an attack on the First Amendment," said Dasbach. "Doesn't the President understand that by allowing citizens to freely express their opinions about the government, freedom of speech *discourages* violent actions like the bombing in Oklahoma City?"

"Talking about government abuses -- such as the loss of innocent lives in Waco, Texas -- didn't cause the distrust and fear of government we see today. *Ignoring* government abuses is what causes problems," he said.

Dasbach also warned about the consequences of the Omnibus Anti-Terrorism Act (S. 390 and HR 896), which may be rushed through Congress in the aftermath of Oklahoma City.

"The true victims of this frightening bill would be honest American citizens -- not international terrorists," he said. "This bill is a license for government agencies to investigate political groups and causes almost at will." Dasbach said the Libertarian Party has joined the National Committee Against Oppressive Legislation (NCARL) to work against the bill.

"I understand why politicians feel the need to make proposals like this," said Dasbach. "We have suffered a national tragedy -- and politicians feel they have to do something, anything, to prevent it from ever happening again. But undermining our fundamental liberty is *not* the answer. The men, women, and children who died in Oklahoma City deserve better."

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Almost 150 Libertarians serve in elected and appointed office around the country. The Libertarian Party platform calls for vigorous defense of the Bill of Rights, free enterprise, civil liberties, free trade, no meddling overseas, and private charity. The Libertarian Party has led the way for the past 24 years in conducting an intelligent and reasoned dialogue about the role of government in a free society -- in the proud tradition of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and Henry David Thoreau.